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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Washington, D. C.

26 July 1950

The Honorable
The Under Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Webb:

The State-Defense Staff Study of 1 May 1950, on "Production of National Intelligence", transmitted with your letter of 7 July for my comments, points up the conflicting theories which have prevailed since the inception of CIA on the responsibility within our Government for intelligence relating to the national security, i. e., a responsible single Director versus a committee of co-equal directors of the several intelligence agencies.

The proposals set forth in the Staff Study would be so radical a departure from the concept of the Central Intelligence Agency as envisaged by the Congress that there exists at present no legal authority to adopt them.

As an indication of this Congressional intent, I quote from the statement of the Chairman of the Special Subcommittee of the House Expenditures Committee Investigating Intelligence Activities of the Government (at the time of the Bogota crisis) dated 16 April 1948:

"It may be necessary for Congress to enact additional legislation to give the CIA the independent status it was generally presumed to enjoy Our Central Intelligence Agency must be protected against censorship or intimidation by any arm of the Executive Branch."

This position has been repeatedly made clear to me in virtually every committee session I have attended since assuming the Directorship. It is also a fact that in times of crisis the appropriate Congressional Committees have always called on the Director of Central Intelligence for an accounting and for briefing on the intelligence situation. The Congress has always made it amply clear in these situations that it holds the Director

25 JUL 1950
AD-23

SECRET

- 2 -

and this Agency completely responsible in the field of foreign intelligence, and it presumes that this Agency has the requisite powers and authorities to make that responsibility effective in the interests of our national security.

The effect of your Staff Study is to abrogate the statutory responsibility for the production of national intelligence of the Central Intelligence Agency and shift it as a collective responsibility to a committee. This is specified in your study as follows:

"Until the emergence of a national estimate or study from the IAC, collective responsibility is inescapable under the Act of 1947 The full statutory responsibility of the D/CI for the production of national intelligence becomes operative only when . . . final drafts of national estimates or studies are recommended by the IAC to the D/CI."

Not only does the National Security Act contemplate no such doctrine of collective responsibility, but, in NSC 50, the National Security Council specifically disavowed this doctrine in the following language:

". . . we do not believe that the Director and the IAC should be bound by the concept of collective responsibility because this would inevitably reduce coordinated national intelligence to the lowest common denominator among the agencies concerned."

Careful thought and study has been given to the existing NSCID 1 in its relation to the statutory responsibilities of this Agency. The present directives and their implementation have not been satisfactory. There has been prepared for submission to the National Security Council a basic NSCID which is attached herewith for your information. This draft clearly establishes the minimum authorities necessary to enable this Agency to fulfill its statutory responsibilities and likewise establishes the responsibilities of the departmental agencies in support of national intelligence. Separate specific comments on your Staff Study are also attached.

It is noted that you propose to submit your Staff Study with its proposed NSC Directive direct to the NSC. It is therefore requested that our comments and the inclosure accompany your submission.

SECRET

SECRET

- 3 -

As a matter of parallel interest the CIA has been instructed by the NSC to consider through normal NSCID procedure the following quoted comments of the Secretary of Defense, and to submit recommendations in connection therewith:

"I do not find the IAC comments on RECOMMENDATION 8 to be convincing. Existing directives fall far short of coming to grips with urgent and recognizable problems of coordination of intelligence in Washington and overseas. Furthermore, I do not concede that the 'rather elaborate committee structure' is either inevitable or desirable. On the contrary, it is my belief that the intricate committee structure is the consequence of compromises created by inter-bureau rivalries rather than the results of objective study of intelligence organization.

Dependable conclusions from * * * intelligence, as from every other subject matter of national intelligence, should result from evaluation and synthesis within the framework of the Central Agency for all available material from every Federal source. Final responsibility for coordinating the collection of this material as well as its processing should rest squarely in the same agency. With that responsibility should go corresponding authority, which now is ambiguous and obscured in the present interlocking committee structure."

In view of our instructions from the NSC in connection with this statement, it would in any case be incumbent on this Agency to submit our proposed revision of the NSCID through normal channels as it reflects our considered opinion of what is needed as a proper foundation for the national intelligence mission. Please inform us if you wish such submission withheld pending your direct approach to the NSC.

Sincerely,

(Signed)

R. H. Hillenkoetter

R. H. HILLENKOETTER

Rear Admiral, USN

Director of Central Intelligence

2 Incls:

Basic NSCID

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